

Guardian in the Dark

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Category: Halo

Genre: Drama, Sci-Fi

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2012-08-27 04:51:10

Updated: 2012-08-27 04:51:10

Packaged: 2016-04-27 01:16:17

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,646

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: The UNSC colony Brink was glassed, most of it's population killed, the few left alive struggling to survive. The government is desperately trying to maintain order, with three heavily armed factions threatening the peace at every turn. However, the police of the planet are not ready to give up, and neither is a woman who unearths the tools that will allow her to fight back.

Guardian in the Dark

Chapter 1

Unearthed Hope

Author's Note: Well, here it is, my little side project that's 50% Jon CJB's Dues Ex Machina and 50% Infamous. It's probably going to be a lot shorter than From the Ashes and New Origins with not as many characters, but knowing my insatiable love for creating characters, I make no promises. Ok, let's get going.

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Alice Foster blinked wearily as she heard the phone next to her bed go off. She let out a faint sigh as she reached out and fumbled for it, grabbing and missing three times before finally grabbing it and holding it up to her ear. "Yeah?" she asked, her voice barely a whisper.

"Um, yes am I speaking to Alice Foster?" a nervous voice asked.

"Yup."

"Oh, good. I heard from a friend that you're a really good mechanic. My car broke down the other day and I don't know what's wrong with it. I can't afford a new one or to take public transportation for that long. Is there any chance that you could fix it?"

Alice sighed as she threw her covers back, sitting up in her bed.
"Ok, I'll be there soon."

"Oh great, my address is—" Alice mentally took notes of the man's address as she got out of bed, slipping on a pair of work clothes before grabbing a wooden cane that was propped against her bed. "Is there any chance that you can tell me how much this is going to cost?"

"I'll have to see how bad the damage is before I can tell you that, I'll see you there." Alice turned off her phone and slid in back onto her bedside table as she began to walk out of her room, which was on the ground floor as supposed to the second. The reason for this was that Alice had a bad leg that forced her to limp whenever she walked without a cane, as such she tended to avoid stairs when possible.

She walked into the kitchen, where a man in a lab coat was sitting at the table, eating a sandwich. "You're up earlier than usual," he said, looking up from his lunch.

"I got a call, some guy wants me to fix his car. It's good money, so I thought why not. How about you? I thought that you had to work today Devin."

Devin smiled as he took another bite out of his sandwich. "I managed to get the day off. I managed to get enough work done yesterday that they said that I didn't need to come in today. That and I made a deal with a friend, I don't work today, but I need to run out to one of old abandoned UNSC bases and see if I can find any salvage for him."

"Are you sure that it's safe out there? Even if you manage to avoid the Skulls and the Abolitionists, there are still plain old bandits living out in the ruins out there. Are you sure that it's worth a run?"

"Well, I was kind of hoping that you would tag along, you are a damn good shot after all."

The faintest grin slid across her face. "Ok...ok I'll make you a deal. You come with me and me with this job, and I'll make sure that you don't get your head blown off."

"Deal!" Devin shouted, sounding excited as he scarfed down the last of his sandwich and got to his feet. "I'll get the car started." The two of them headed for the door, walking out and heading towards her pickup truck,

"Is there any chance that you can drive?" she asked, rubbing her eyes with her free hand. "I'm still half asleep."

"You got it!" he said, climbing into the driver's seat and she got into the passenger's. There was a low growl as he turned the key and the truck roared to life, pulling out of the driveway to their two story house and heading onto the main road. Devin's hand reached down and turned on the radio, the voice of a news announcer filling the truck.

"And with election day just a month away, things are heating up. Current mayor Andrew Hamilton and newcomer Dexter Southgate are neck and neck in the polls. While initially Southgate's policies of enforced curfew, increased police force, harsher penalties and authorization to make searches and arrests without warrants were dismissed as borderline martial law, he has recently been gaining support, with the rise of the terrorist group known as the Ghosts and the spike of aggressive activity of the gang known as the Skulls, and the anti-establishment movement called the Abolitionists."

Alice's hand tightened around her cane in anger. Seven years ago, the planet that they were on, Brink, had been one of the largest in the UNSC, second only to a couple other colonies, including Reach. It had had a high priority on weapons manufacturing, and with the war constantly creating a demand for them, it had caused trillions of credits to pour into the colony, creating what many at the time had called a golden age. Unfortunately, the Covenant had noticed.

A fleet of eighty ships attacked the colony, smashing the UNSC defensive fleet, who were hopelessly outgunned. They fight turned decisively in the Covenant's favor when they managed to destroy the handful of Super MACs that the colony had had, and then they had started to glass the colony. They had been deadly precise, taking out all major spaceports first, cutting off all escape routes before moving onto the cities. The few surviving UNSC ships retreated as the Covenant continued to glass the planet, but a single ship remained behind. As the Covenant ships moved to glass the last remaining city, the last surviving ship, the Thunderchild, flew into the center of the alien fleet and overloaded its slipspace drive. The explosion devastated the entire Covenant fleet, completely obliterating the majority of them and ripping the remaining ones in half, causing their remains to crash in the very wastelands that they had created.

The citizens of Salvation City, the city that had been spared, had been overjoyed at the sight of the Covenant fleet being destroyed...at first. As the feeling of triumph faded, they realized while they had won, their victory was a very hollow one. The planet's population of 200 million had been reduced to 500,000, all other cities on the planets had been devastated, but worst of all was the horrible realization that came clear to them after a few days. With all the spaceports destroyed, no FTL radio and both the UNSC and the Covenant believing that the planet had been glassed due to the UNSC's retreat, there was no way off of the planet.

There had been panic, mass hysteria, people desperately attempting to cobble together half hearted attempts to get off of the planet. Eventually some form of order had been restored when the surviving UNSC soldiers and the police of Salvation City joined forces to form the Military Police of Salvation City (MPSC) and a democratic government lead by a mayer had been formed. Eventually, life had moved on in Salvation City, with farmers cultivating what little farmland was left, factory workers getting assembly lines working again, in may ways life had returned to normal in Salvation City, as it became self sustaining.

But in the initial confusion, large amounts of military grade weapons had gone missing, taken from storehouses that the understaffed MPSC had not been able to guard while quelling the riots. Two factions had risen up, the Skulls and the Abolitionists. 'All a bunch of

'shortsighted morons,' Alice thought bitterly. 'The Skulls are just thugs with above average guns doing what they always do, breaking laws to line their pockets. They do have a tendency to kill anyone that they think is a threat though...the problem is that they think that just about everyone who is even a little aggressive to them is a threat now. Bunch of close minded idiots, the whole lot of them, they can't even come up with a clever name.'

'The Abolitionists aren't a whole lot better. They used to be a local Insurrectionist cell operating on the planet, but now they've turned into full blown anarchists. They don't want the government to tell them how to do anything. They like to consider themselves a glorious revolutionary movement when in reality they're just a bunch of terrorists. Then again these are the same people that kept bombing UNSC facilities twenty years into the Human-Covenant War, they were always kind of stupid.'

'And the Ghosts...well I don't know jack about the Ghosts. No one does. From what we've seen of them they're a lot smaller than the Skulls and the Abolitionists, but they're easily the most well equipped and well trained of the three of them. Odds are they're ex-military, but I have no idea what they're trying accomplish, no one does. They'll be quiet for weeks on end then all of a sudden they're kidnap a police officer and hold him for ransom or rob a store. It doesn't make any sense, but the weird thing is, they rarely kill anyone, usually only cops and only when they start shooting at them. Still, I feel less than comfortable with them running around.'

"So who are you voting for?" Devin asked, glancing at Alice.

"Hm?" she said as her line of thought was broken. "Oh, I honestly couldn't tell you. I need to think about it some more. Probably Hamilton though, Southgate goes a little too far for me to be comfortable with."

"The guy has a couple of good points though. With the Skulls and Abolitionists running around I really don't think that we can afford to just carry on the way that things are going. But then again, you're the retired soldier, I'm just a scientist. Speaking of which, you ever think about joining the SCMP?"

"With this leg?" she asked, tapping her leg with her cane. "I can barely hobble around with this thing, I'd never be a cop with this. They'd stick me behind a desk and I'm pretty sure that when the Commissioner said that she was short staffed, he wasn't talking about his secretaries. I'd rather stick to fixing things, I'm good at it and with no important coming in, people are only throwing away what they're sure can't be saved. It's a good job to have right now."

"Oh really? Then how come nine years ago you needed to rent out a room for me so that you could afford to pay the mortgage on your house?" Devin asked, smirking slightly.

"Different times, jackass," Alice said, her face betraying her as she smiled. "Back then operating a repair service out of your house wasn't a great way to roll in the dough, now it kind of is though."

"Yeah, lucky you. Oh hey, I think that this is the place." The truck

slowly slid to a halt in front of another house in the suburbs. From her seat, Alice could spot a man standing in front of a black sedan, scratching his head.

"Oh, are you-"

"Yup," Alice said, climbing out of the truck before reaching into the bed of her truck and pulling out a massive box of tools. "Well, let's see what the damage is." She approached the man's sedan, placing her box of tools on the ground right next to it before flipping the hood up. "Huh, this doesn't look too bad," she said, rummaging around. "This should take me fifteen minutes to fix, twenty at the very most."

With that, she got to work, bending down to grab tool after tool from her box and diving into the hood of the car again. She explained exactly what the problem was to Devin while she was fixing it, also going into detail of how she was repairing it, but it went in one ear and out the other for him. He might be a UNSC scientist, but he didn't know the first thing about cars.

"Ah, that should do it," she said, slamming the roof down. "Give it a try."

The man hesitantly climbed into the front seat of the sedan and turned the key. Instantly the engine roared to life. "Hot damn!" he shouted, hopping out of the car with pure glee. "You just saved my ass, how much to I owe you?"

"It was a pretty simple fix," she said, wiping her hands off with a rag. "I just had to replace a couple of parts. 150 credits will do."

"Just 150? Son of a bitch is that a whole lot less than a new car. You got it miss, that money will be in your bank account by the end of the day."

No problem," she said, limping back to her truck and getting back in, "just be careful with that thing from now on!" she shouted as she the truck pulled out.

"All right," Devin said, "next stop, the outer ruins."

"Fine, but let's make this quick, I don't want to be caught out there for too long. I...damn it," she said pushing her dark red hair out of her eyes and rubbing them again, "I'm freaking falling asleep again. If you want me to do this, you're buying me a coffee."

Devin laughed. "Sure thing."

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In the confines of a small coffee shop, two men were sitting at a table, a chessboard in-between them. One of them was dark skinned and wore a t-shirt, jeans and sandals, while the other wore a white dress shirt and black dress pants. Currently the second man was clutching his head in his hands and he stared at the chess board, while the other was slumped back in his chair, sipping a coffee and looking rather bored.

"Could you make your move sometime today please?" he asked.

"Don't rush me Jaden!" the second man snapped, "Chess is a game of strategy, a faulty move could very well be your last move!"

Jaden chuckled. "I guess you would know that pretty well huh Rebuke?"

"Oh fuck you you little shit!" Rebuke swore, continuing to study the chessboard. As he did, a smile came across his face. "How about this?" he asked, taking his knight and moving it, placing it right in front of Jaden's queen.

"Oh, nice," the younger man said. "You managed to box in my queen. If I move to take it, your rook all the way back there will have a perfect line to take her out."

"Damn straight."

"However, you left your king exposed, and my bishop has been hiding all the way in the back up until just now," he said, taking said piece and moving it across the board. "Checkmate."

"WHAT!?" Rebuke roared. "No...no no no no no, I can get out of this. What if I moved my king here-"

"My rook is there."

"Well what if I moved this bishop-"

"My other rook."

"What if I-"

"You lost man."

"SON OF A BITCH!" Rebuke leaned back into his chair, shaking his head in frustration as Jaden smirked. "I thought I had you that time."

"Hey, if it makes you feel any better that was the best that you've done so far. You nearly had me a couple of times."

"That just makes it even worse," he muttered, grabbing a cup of coffee that he had next to him and taking a sip from it. Jaden began to laugh and as he did, there was a tingling as the door slid open. Both of them looked around to see a woman and a man approaching the counter.

"Coffee, black, largest cup you got," the woman said briefly.

"Yeesh, what's with you and caffeine?" the man asked.

"Hey, I think I know that guy," Rebuke said. "I think he's one of the quacks that work at HQ, Devin Carter. I think that girl is his room mate, he rented out a room in her house."

"Her?" Jaden said, looking at Alice. "She's got to be at least six feet tall...and he lives with her? Lucky son of a bitch."

"Hey! Carter! Over here!"

"Detective Kovic?" Devin said, turning to look at the two. "Detective Takeo too? What are you too doing here?"

"Today's our day off, and I'm trying to beat this son of a bitch for the umpteenth time."

Devin grinned. "Good luck with that, even I can't beat him. By the way have you two meat Alice? Jaden and Rebuke, Alice Foster, retired Marine Sergeant. Alice, Jaden and Rebuke, Detectives."

"These two are SCMP Detectives?" Alice said, "This one looks like he's better of picking up women at a strip club and this one looks like he's only nineteen," she said, pointing at Rebuke and Jaden respectively.

"Uh...he IS nineteen," Devin whispered.

Jaden sighed as he rested his head on the table. "Why does every woman I ever meet always point that out."

"Mainly because you suck at picking them up," Rebuke said teasingly.

"He may be young, but the kid is a damn prodigy," Devin said. "Besides, the police are understaffed as it is, they can't afford to turn people down, but he's hardly a liability."

Alice didn't looked convinced. "In what way? He's good at chess?"

Devin laughed. "There's more to him than that. Maybe one day you'll come to HQ with me and you can see for yourself."

"Maybe," she said, sounding uncertain. "I don't-" There was a loud bang and all four of them wheeled around. Four men burst in through the front door, three of them wearing ski masks over their faces and holding guns, while the fourth man seemed to be holding a knife in each hand and wasn't wearing a mask.

"If I were you and wouldn't try anything," the man with the knives said, grinning slightly as the men with the guns rushed into the store, one of them pointing his gun at the four of them while the other two aimed them at the cashier, his hands shooting up into the air. Alice's eyes narrowed in disgust as she noticed a white symbol spray painted onto the front of all of their clothes. A skull.

"Now then, I take it that you're the owner of this place?" he asked, approaching the counter, idly flicking his knives. "I'd say if you were to hand over all of the cash that you've got in the register if you don't want us to shoot you in the head. Consider this protection money."

"Jaden," Rebuke hissed, "you got your gun?"

"Yeah, you?"

"Got it."

"You're not the only one," Alice hissed, gently gesturing to a small lump at her side.

"Are you sure that—" Rebuke began, but was cut off as one of the Skulls shouted at them.

"Hey, keep your damn voices down," he snarled, walking towards them with an assault rifle raised. "That's it, everyone down on the ground, hands behind your heads." Alice nodded at Rebuke and Jaden, who returned the gesture. "NOW!" the Skull shouted. Jaden, Rebuke and Alice all drew their weapons, Jaden an SMG and Rebuke and Alice magnums, and aimed them at the Skull, opening fire at him. The other Skulls jumped at the sound of gunshots and turned to see their comrade's body falling to the floor, riddled with bullets.

"What?!" the man with knives shouted, turning on the spot and seeing the others push over a table, taking cover behind it. "Fuck!" he roared, as his two men opened fire at the table with their weapons. Alice popped her head out at the side and popped off a handful of shots, causing one of them to collapse to the ground. "Damn it, they're cops! Run for it!" he shouted to the remaining man. Immediately they bolted out of the door, the Skull with the gun firing a couple of shots behind him as he did.

Both Jaden and Rebuke jumped up and ran towards the door of the store, a car speeding past them as they did. They raised their weapons at the fleeing car and opened fire at it, a handful of bullets hitting the back as it speed down the street and out of sight. "Did you get a look at their license plate?" Rebuke asked, looking at Jaden.

"It didn't have one, it was ripped off."

'Shit. I'll call this in, maybe they'll be able to track it down by appearance,' he said, putting his finger to his ear. "HQ? HQ this is Detective Rebuke Kovic. My partner and I were just involved in an armed robbery by the Skull gang. We have two gang members KIA and two more on the run in a—"

"Is everyone ok?" Jaden asked, walking away from the front door and back into the store. "Are you ok sir?" he asked, looking behind the counter where the owner was crouching in terror. He nodded weakly. "What about you two?" he asked, looking at Devin, who was helping Alice to her feet.

"I'll manage," she hissed, grabbing her cane and ejecting the used clip from her magnum before loading a fresh one. "I'll give you credit, you operate pretty well in a firefight," she said, flipping the safety on her pistol on and holstering it.

"So do you," Jaden said, blushing slightly. "I'm surprised that you were so quick on the draw. Do you have any idea who that guy was? The man with the knives? He's one of the main enforcers of the Skulls. He calls himself Slice, no idea what his real name is. He's damn brutal, likes cutting up anyone who posses a threat to the Skulls. I hope he doesn't come after you now that you shot one of his men."

"No offense, but I'm not particular intimidated by a man who calls himself Slice," she said dryly, making her way back towards the

counter where a full cup off coffee was sitting on the counter. "Hm...that's the good stuff," she said as she picked it up and sipped it. "Thanks," she said, taking a couple of bills out of her pocket and dropping them on the counter.

"So...is there any chance that the trip to the ruins is off?" Devin asked, shaking slightly as he sat down.

"The ruins?" Rebuke said, walking towards the rest of them. "What the Hell are you going all the way out there for?"

"Made a little deal to get the day off. I need to pick up some salvage to keep a favor."

"Well...how about this," Rebuke said. "You covered our backs today, how about we cover yours? Backup will be here soon to take over. We'll brief them on what happened, we all give them our statements, and we help you with your salvaging trip."

"I don't know," Alice muttered, sipping her coffee again. "It's kind of a double edged sword. We'll have more guns when push comes to shove, but it'll make it more likely that we'll draw attention."

"Come on Alice, we can trust these guys," Devin said. "Jaden's a good guy. Rebuke is a bit of a Casanova wannabe but he's still all right."

"OI!" Rebuke shouted.

"All right, all right," Alice said, "We'll bring them along. Hope that that damn backup gets here soon."

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"Are things always that bad?" Alice asked, glancing at Devin. He was driving the truck over the Salvation City city limits, Jaden and Rebuke's police cruiser right behind them.

"No, usually it's worse. Usually the Skulls don't make their robberies where two armed officers and a retired soldier are getting coffee, and they usually leave a corpse, even if the completely cooperate. They like to send that message, 'we own this city, we'll do whatever we want to you, cross us and you'll end up dead.' It's kind of unnerving to be honest. I'm glad that I decided to bring you along today."

Alice smiled slightly, "I'm happy to do what I can to help, seems like I can't do much besides that and fixing things."

"Hold on, I think that we're here," Devin said, slowing down the truck, causing it to come to a halt in front of a worn out metal building in the middle of a rocky wasteland. "Yeah, this looks like one of the old UNSC military bases," he said, climbing out of the side, Alice doing the same.

"Are you sure we're even going to find anything here?" she asked, glancing at him. "I thought this place had been rather throughly picked over."

"There's a chance. The Insurrectionist presence on this planet was pretty heavy and intimidating, even before they became the Abolitionists, so they started hiding things in hidden compartments and bunkers, which probably doubled to hide them from the Covenant in case the Cole Protocol had to be activated. If we're lucky we might stumble across one of them, after all no one alive knows where they are. Only the highest ranking officers knew where they were kept, and the Commissioner is the highest ranking one left, and he was only a Major."

"Still seems like a shot in the dark," Alice muttered as Jordan and Rebuke approached them.

"I don't like this place," Jordan said wearily, looking at the base. "I hear that there are some bandits that ditched the city and attack anyone who comes out too far. They might be living in here."

"Somehow I doubt it, there's not a large supply of food in there and you can't grow it all the way out in the wasteland, but they still could be nearby," Alice admitted. "So you've got a point, we should be careful."

"Ok, let's make this quick. Let's go in, grab something shiny, get out, get our faces on the front of the news tomorrow," Rebuke said. "Handsome man, little kid, cripple and egghead stop robbery and then dig up advanced piece of-OW!" Rebuke winced in pain as Alice whacked him in the shin with her cane.

"Awfully handy for doing that," she said grinning slightly. "The best part? I'm a girl, AND a cripple, so it's gonna look pretty bad if you try and hit me back."

"I'll just do it when no one is looking then," Rebuke said, returning her grin.

"Challenge accepted," she said, the four of them heading into the base as they did.

"Crap, this place has seen better days," Jaden said as they walked through the main entrances, cobwebs filling it.

"It was hit during the Covenant attack. You probably couldn't see it from the front but the rear half of this place is nothing but rubble. It got bombed by Seraph fighters," Alice said.

"Yeah I heard about that," Rebuke said. "The SCMP scrounged up all the equipment that they could find in this place and haled it off back to the city...what was left when they got here anyway."

Alice scowled. "This is where the Skulls armed up huh?"

"Yup," he said, as they continued through the base into a massive storage area that was completely empty with the exception of a few crates. "Anyway, let's make this fast. Poke around to see if you can find anything and if we can't let's get out of here."

The four of them spread out, each of them heading to a different corner of the room. Alice approached a couple of empty crates, grabbing the lid and prying it open. "Empty," she said, sounding

disgruntled, before moving to another one and prying the lid off of it too. "Same here," she said, prying the lid off of another one. "Ah christ, this was a massive waste of time," she said, kicking the crate in frustration and causing it to tip over. She was about to walk towards another one when she noticed something rather odd about the ground that had been covered by the crate that she had just turned over. There was a tiny indent in the ground.

Curiosity getting the better of her, she bent down and slid her finger into the ground, pulling up on it. There was a loud groaning noise and a large chunk of the ground came up, it was a massive metal lid. "Holy crap, I FOUND SOMETHING!" she shouted.

"Really? No kidding!?" Devin shouted. Both he and the two detectives rushed to where she was standing as she walked to the front of the hidden door that she had just opened, all of them looking down at what she had uncovered. A suit of armor was lying in a compartment, pure white and with a narrow orange visor and a rounded head.

"Holy crap, is that MJOLNIR?" Jaden swore.

"I don't think so. That helmet does look like the Rogue model, but everything else looks off," Devin said. "It looks modified...but why is this here? I thought that Reach handled all power armor productions."

"Maybe this isn't for SPARTANs." Rebuke suggested.

"Really? I kinda doubt that," Devin replied. As they spoke, Alice reached forward, pressing the palm of her hand against the chest of the armor. As she did, a sharp sting erupted at the center of her hand.

"GAH!" she shouted, pulling her hand back.

"What's wrong!?" Devin said.

"Damn thing stung me," Alice hissed, looking down at her hand and noticing a trickle of blood pouring down, as well as a small needle sticking out of the armor. At that point synthesized voice spoke.

"DNA analysis complete, UNSC Marine Corps, Sergeant Alice Foster. DNA lock now in place."

"What the Hell was that supposed to mean?" she asked, glaring at the armor. "How does this thing know my name? What's a DNA lock?"

"I don't know, but we need to get this thing in the truck," Devin said. "We can analyze it more thoroughly back at HQ. Help me lift it." Jaden and Rebuke nodded as they bent down, sliding their hands under the armor. "Who knows? This might help us take Salvation City back."

"Maybe," Alice said, staring at the armor. "Maybe."

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Author's Note: I would like to thank 117Jorn for coming up with the concepts for Jaden and Rebuke, as well as the designs for several

characters that haven't been introduced yet. As always with him, he gave me the core concepts and I tweaked them a little. I hope that you enjoyed my new work, *Guardian in the Dark*.

And...pardon me I seriously need to vent. I am not particularly happy at the moment, and I don't mean that in a pissed off way, I mean that in a kinda depressed way. College is coming up in a couple of weeks, my best friend moved halfway across the country for college and I'm probably only going to see him a couple of times outside of summer, I'm not a very social butterfly so he's the only friend I regularly hang out with, and in case you didn't pick up on it from reading my stories, I'm kind of a romantic, yet I've never had a girlfriend, I've never kissed a girl and I've never been on a date and I'm freaking 18 years old, 19 come October. And I want to have a girlfriend, I really do, someone I really care about and can talk to and freak, if someone offered me a deal where I would find the perfect girlfriend but I could never have sex with her, I would say "sign me up, I don't care, I just want to be able to cuddle with someone at night." Over the past five days I keep feeling pangs of sadness and the urge to cry, to the point where I honestly wonder if I'm sorta suffering from depression. So, yeah, I'm a little bit of a mess right now...still, there are bright sides to my life. I've got you guys, and I'm going to be honest, writing out these stories and listening to your feedback really helps break me out of a stump, especially when one of my readers thought that *From the Ashes* was so good that it got put on TV tropes' fan fic recommendation page. Before my friend left he had a party with a bunch of people I've never met before and now I'm trying to get their contact information to invite them over. My finical situation is pretty solid and I've got too loving parents...it's just that that kind of seems irrelevant sometimes, I mean, what's stability in life if you're not happy? I'm sorry, I'm not sure what point I'm trying to make, I just REALLY needed to talk about this to someone.

End
file.